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Jiamu Zhu

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Calibrating the Direction of China's Reform and Opening-Up in the New Era

Jiamu Zhu

Institute of Contemporary China Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China

ABSTRACT

Xi Jinping's report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) announced that the socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. This involves a new era for reform and opening-up as well. As with the constant reference to the originally charted course for recalibrating direction when piloting a huge ship, China's reform and opening-up also requires constant comparison with its original target destination to recalibrate its direction moving forward. This article combines Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era with the new practice of comprehensively deepening the reform since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, and presents a systematic analysis and elaboration for the direction calibration of the reform and opening-up with their conditions in the new era from six aspects, i.e., the reform and opening-up and its direction and methodology, its starting and ending points, its core issues, its foothold, its independence, Party conduct and social atmosphere. This article not only points out that this calibration amounts to the rectification and remedy of past deficiencies, but also notes further measures to be taken in response to changes of the actual situation and new developments.

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Since the 18th CPC National Congress, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, also a new era for reform and opening-up. Xi Jinping said at the 6th collective study of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on June 29, 2018 that the Party should stick to the correct political direction in the planning of major strategies, formulation of major policies, deployment of major tasks, and promotion of major work, with frequent comparison with the timetable, and the Party should correct deviations in a timely manner (*People's Daily*, July 1, 2018). Practice shows that these six years of the new era are not only six years of deepening reform and opening-up, but also six years of constant calibration and the correction of deviations along the course of reform and opening-up. This kind of calibration not only means the rectification and remedy of past deficiencies, but also involves measures to be taken in response to changes of the actual situation and new developments.

In the new era, the calibration of the direction of reform and opening-up is most clearly expressed in terms of the six main areas discussed below.

1. The Direction and Methodology of the Reform and Opening-Up

Does the reform and opening-up have any specific direction, and if so what is it? Should we conduct pilot projects, make steady progress and “cross the river by feeling the stones”? There have been disagreements on these issues in the past. Xi Jinping has addressed these questions.

Our reform and opening-up does have our direction, position and principle. We will certainly hold high the banner of reform, but our reform must keep moving forward on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. We will neither follow the old path, that is closed and rigid, nor commit the evil of abandoning socialism and taking an erroneous path. (Xi 2014a, 14)

He also pointed out that “the reform and opening-up is a revolution, we must stick to the right direction and follow the right path” (Xi 2014a, 14).

The purpose of the reform is to constantly promote the self-improvement and development of China’s socialist system and give socialism new vitality as well. The core of this is to uphold and improve the Party’s leadership and to uphold and perfect the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. If we deviate from this, we will completely miss our goal. (Xi 2014a, 18)

In addressing the possible direction of modernization and extending the capability of the national governance system he said,

We must completely understand the general goal of comprehensively deepening reform, which is composed of two parts, namely, the perfection and development of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and the upgrading of national governance system and capability. There is an issue concerning the relationship between the two parts. The former dictates the fundamental direction, that is, the direction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, not any other path. (Xi 2015b, 82)

Since the period of reform and opening-up began, there have always been challenges to the Party’s practice of adhering to the right direction. For example, when the need to adhere to the four cardinal principles in the reform is reaffirmed, some would say that political restructuring is lagging behind. When they hear that stress is laid on making state-owned enterprises bigger, stronger and better, they say that we need to restart reform. Xi Jinping did not shy away from these voices, but refuted them point-for-point in a forthright manner. He argued,

One cannot say in general that China’s reform is lagging behind in one area. It may be true that China is moving faster or slower in some respects at certain times. However, on the whole, we cannot say that while some aspects have undergone changes all the others must also undergo changes. The essence of the problem is what is to be changed and what is not. For those that cannot be changed, they should not be changed no matter how much time has passed. We cannot copy from others. The world is developing and society is moving forward. It will be only a dead end if we do not carry out our reform and opening-up. And it will also be another dead end if we pursue a “reform and opening-up” against the socialist orientation. When it comes to direction, we must be very clear-headed. Our goal is to constantly promote self-improvement and development of the socialist system, rather than to reform and change the socialist system as a whole. We must adhere to the four cardinal principles, which are fundamental to the founding of the country. We will not only apply the four cardinal principles to ensure the right direction of reform and opening-up, but also make

reform and opening-up give the four cardinal principles new contemporary meaning, and unswervingly follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics by removing all kinds of interference. (Xi 2014a, 15)

He further added: “The reason why we continue to push forward the reform is to advance the cause of the Party and the people, rather than please certain groups. We should not apply Western theories and opinions to our reform” (Xi 2015b, 69). He also pointed out, “Our political principle and bottom line govern how and what we should change, and we must have political determination” (Xi 2014a, 49). He held that

We should have the courage to take risks and make bold moves. We should always stick to our own path, and resolutely change what we can and firmly hold in place what should not be changed. We should create conditions for those that should be changed yet currently lack those necessary conditions. We should make changes promptly where quick changes are required and proceed in a step-by-step way with those that cannot be changed quickly. We must be determined in pushing forward the targeted reform and strive for early results. (Xi 2015b, 69)

Xi Jinping has not only rationally refuted various calls for unbridled reform but also thoroughly exposed the nature and purpose of such calls.

Some hostile forces and people with hidden motives are also there waving flags, manufacturing public opinion, confusing people, and defining reform as meaningful only if it adjusts the country in line with the Western political system. Their real goal is not what they claim. In this regard, we need to take a clear-eyed look, maintain political firmness and be clear about our political orientation. (Xi 2014a, 19)

Furthermore,

If we tailor our practice to the standards of Western capitalism and apply their evaluation system to measure the development of our country, then whatever fits Western standards is deemed feasible and whatever does not fit is regarded as backward and obsolete and therefore to be criticized and attacked. The consequences of such an approach would be unimaginable! In the end, you will either capitulate to the West, or suffer its criticism. (Xi 2016a, 8–9)

He has emphasized,

We must keep the right direction of reform and take a firm and clear-cut stance when it comes to such fundamental issues as the path, theory and system, and we must stand firm and take a clear stance when it comes to major issues of right and wrong. (Xi 2014a, 148)

In the direction of the reform and opening-up we should have political concentration

[t]hat is, no matter how the reform and opening-up is conducted, we will always stick to the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the institutions of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and adhere to the basic demand of achieving the new victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics as proposed by the 18th CPC National Congress. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 110)

In terms of the methodology of the reform and opening-up, some people have complained about the idea of steadily advancing reform with pilot projects and “crossing the river by feeling the stones.” In the new era, Xi Jinping has confronted these complaints and fully expounded the scientific, rational and necessary nature of such a method from four main points.

First, this method conforms to Marxist epistemology. As he suggests,

Crossing the river by feeling the stones is a reform method full of Chinese wisdom and in line with Marxist epistemology and practice. In practice, for those changes that must be made where positive results are not guaranteed, we will carry out experiments and probe the depths by throwing stones into the water ahead of us. We will give priority to pilot projects, respect practice and creativity, encourage bold experimentation and exploration, gain experience, see clearly, and then push forward. Some countries that adopted so-called “shock therapy” have provided us with profound lessons from their intense political and social crises. (Xi 2014a, 43)

Second, this method has been tested by China’s reform and opening-up. He said,

The reform and opening-up is a brand new undertaking that has never been seen before, so we must adhere to the correct methodology and advance through constant experiment and exploration. . . . This is how China’s reform and opening-up has been carried out. It is a cumulative process of trial, summary and extension. And it is also a process of deepening from rural areas to cities, from coastal areas to inland areas, and from local areas to the whole country. This kind of gradual reform has not only avoided the social unrest caused by an unclear situation and improper measures, but also provided a guarantee for the steady progress of reform and the smooth realization of the goal. Crossing the river by feeling the stones is in line with both people’s understanding of objective laws and the dialectics of transformation from quantity to quality. The fact that we crossed the river by feeling for stones in the early days of reform and opening-up does not mean that such a practice should be abandoned today. (Xi 2014a, 54)

Third, this method can avoid repeating the old habit of jumping the gun.

The reform should be carried out in an orderly manner. Local governments should not rush in executing plans that should be centrally organized, and should not delay those that should be promoted as soon as possible. For those that should be done through pilot schemes, we must not rush to expand, for those that should advance after careful research, we must avoid hasty action, and for those that require legal authorization, we must not advance prematurely. We should avoid rushing ahead with things when the time is not yet ripe and the conditions are not yet available. (Xi 2014a, 49)

Fourth, this approach can prevent subversive mistakes in the reform.

“Governing a big country is as delicate as frying a small fish.” As a big country, we cannot afford to make subversive mistakes in fundamental issues. Once made, such mistakes have irreversible and irreparable consequences. . . . To advance the reform agenda at the present stage, we must fully understand the situation, grasp the general tendency, and seek improvement in stability. Practice has shown us that it is not easy to return to the right path once deviation is found after a policy is carried out for a period of time. Our policy measures must go through repeated demonstration and scientific evaluation before they are introduced so as to be practical, effective and long-lasting. And they must not be done in a reckless fashion like flipping over a pancake. (Xi 2014a, 42)

2. On the Starting and Ending Points of the Reform and Opening-Up

Socialism is a social ideal and system that puts both the interests of the whole society and the general public first. Its essence lies in opposing exploitation and advocating fairness. This is the essence of scientific socialism. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), given the low level of productivity, the CPC originally intended to

implement a new-democracy and then implement socialism. However, in order to seize the historical opportunity of first developing heavy industry, the CPC adopted a highly centralized planned economy, nationalization of the means of production, public ownership, and distribution according to labor, thus completing the transition to socialism earlier than originally planned. Afterwards, under the influence of leftism, big and pure public ownership and absolutely equal distribution were pursued to the extent that even self-employment in small stores, restaurants, and repair shops were all abandoned, so was the incentive mechanism based on distribution according to labor, such as piece wages and bonuses. Farmers' private plots and household sideline production were treated as the residue of capitalism. Since China's reform and opening-up, the socialist principle of distribution according to labor has been affirmed, the policy of letting some regions and some people become prosperous realized, and the private ownership of factors of production such as capital, technology and management allowed and encouraged, thus enabling the coexistence of a variety of ownership forms founded on public ownership, and a system of distribution according to labor with the coexistence of a variety of modes of distribution. Reform and opening-up has enabled China's transition from a planned economy to a socialist market economy. This has been accompanied by the emergence of a new bias in society, the advocacy of the so-called "homo economicus" hypothesis, with its rhetoric of "the low efficiency of public ownership," "the incompatibility between public ownership and market economy," "preparing state-owned assets for private ownership," and "the need to further widen the income gap," etc. These erroneous ideas influenced the understanding of the relationship between equity and efficiency, leading to the slogan of "efficiency first with consideration for equity after." After entering the twenty-first century, the party slogan underwent changes, beginning with the "emphasis on both efficiency and fairness, with fairness given precedence," then to "the primary distribution should pay attention to fairness while redistribution should pay attention to efficiency," and then to "both primary distribution and redistribution should pay attention to the relationship between efficiency and equity, and redistribution should pay more attention to fairness," and then to "gradually raise the proportion of household income in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), the proportion of labor remuneration in primary distribution, the income level of low-income groups, and effectively regulate high income." Even so, such slogans have never moved beyond the idea of efficiency and fairness as mutually exclusive. After entering the new era, the CPC Central Committee no longer mentions "efficiency and fairness," but puts the handling of this relationship under the general guiding principle of "people-centeredness" and "letting the fruits of reform and development benefit all the people in a more equitable way" (Xi 2017a, 13).

Shortly after the 18th CPC National Congress, at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping warned,

Comprehensively deepening reform must take promoting social equity and justice and improving people's well-being as the starting and ending points. This is a necessary requirement to uphold the fundamental goal of the CPC to serve the people wholeheartedly. . . . If it does not bring real benefits to the people, if it does not create a fairer social environment or even leads to more inequality, reform will lose its meaning and cannot be sustained. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 552–553)

He stressed,

The people-centered development philosophy should be reflected in all links of economic and social development, and the reform should focus on what the people care about and expect, so as to bring more sense of gain to the people through reform. (Xi 2017b, 103)

At the same time, he also explicitly rejected the idea that “distribution should take precedence over development,” arguing that “this statement is inconsistent with the Party’s judgment on the primary stage of socialism and the main contradictions in our society,” and that only by better promoting economic and social development can we “lay a more solid foundation for the improvement of people’s lives” (Xi 2017a, 41).

What are the people’s main concerns about fairness? What are the people’s main social concerns and expectations? Xi Jinping has answered that the main problem facing the people is unfair income distribution, and many basic needs that are yet to be met. He pointed out that there are significant problems in income distribution, “mainly due to the widening income gap, low proportion of labor remuneration in primary distribution, and low proportion of individual income in national income distribution” (Xi 2017a, 37). He also listed many issues that people are concerned about, such as food safety, heating in winter, smog reduction, water safety, healthy garbage disposal, pension services, affordable apartment rental, and so on. He noted,

These issues are of more concern to the people than whether the growth rate is higher or lower. If we only achieve the growth target but make no progress in solving significant problems of common concern to the people, even if we declare that we have completed the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, the people will not agree with us. (Xi 2017a, 19)

At present, the macro environment and internal conditions for people’s livelihood are changing. In the past, food, education and housing were basic needs, while people today have more layers of requirements such as the need for steadily rising incomes, quality medical services, equal access to education, better housing, a better environment and cleaner air. (Xi 2017a, 17)

According to the above analysis, Xi Jinping believes that if we want to maintain a correct starting and ending points of reform, we must first work on the issues of fairness, justice and common prosperity.

We should think of how to promote social fairness and justice and how to improve people’s welfare as a mirror for examining our institutions, system and policies. Reform is needed where things do not conform to the promotion of socialist fairness and justice, and in those areas and segments that problems are identified. (Xi 2014a, 98)

Also,

In the process of comprehensively deepening reform, when we encounter problems of interests that are complex and difficult to balance, we need to think carefully about the actual situation of the people. What exactly are the people expecting? How can we protect the interests of the masses? Are they satisfied with our reform? To make reform decisions more scientific, one of the most important issues is to listen to the opinions and suggestions of the people. (Xi 2014a, 41)

Furthermore,

As the cake keeps getting bigger, we have to divide the cake. In Chinese society, there has always been the greater concern over inequality than scarcity. On the basis of continuous

development, we will do our best to promote social equity and justice. We will not only do what we can but also enhance our capabilities, and make continuous progress in ensuring that all the people have access to education, employment, medical care, old-age care and housing. (Xi 2014a, 97)

Economic development and material well-being are not the whole story, neither is public support determined by this alone. Even if development is achieved, there is still the issue of common prosperity. If we are rich in material senses, but have uneven development and a huge gap between rich and poor or an unfair and polarized society, then how can we win the support from the people? (Xi 2015a, 35)

We must stick to the principle that development is for the people, depends on the people, with its fruits shared by the people. We must make more effective institutional arrangements so that all the people can make steady progress towards common prosperity. There must not be allowances made for the rich to accumulate huge wealth whilst leaving the poor with the crumbs. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 827)

We need to adhere to the basic socialist economic system and distribution system, adjust the pattern of income distribution, improve the redistribution adjustment mechanism mainly through taxation, social security and transfer payments, safeguard social equity and justice, reduce the income gap, and ensure that the fruits of development benefit all the people in a more equitable way. (Xi 2016b, 24–25)

Second, to maintain a correct starting and ending points of the reform, we must firmly address the rights and interests of the people. Xi Jinping told local leaders that public resources should be extended to the community level, extended to rural areas, and favor vulnerable groups, with larger effort on “those works that provide help at difficult times,” on “things that can be done in real conditions, so that the people can see and feel tangible benefits” (Xi 2014a, 92). For example,

in urban construction, there have been many problems that people complain about. Large-scale high-rise building projects undertaken in some places fill the entire city with construction sites; Some city construction lacks unique characteristics and style; Some city construction seeks a large and foreign appearance, and some cadres work only for visual effects during their terms in office; Some cities are indifferent to historical and cultural protection, and urban monuments and historical memories are being destroyed. Some cities lack basic public services such as education, health, culture and sports, causing great inconvenience to citizens. These problems are not only related to the lack of experience and capacity in urban construction, but also related to the fact that some cadres are overeager to achieve success, and have set too high goals with too many slogans. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 602)

Before the 18th National Congress of the CPC, he criticized the so-called “three centralizations” which involved forcing the peasants of some rural areas to move into multi-story housing.

We should promote the urbanization of the rural population on a voluntary, differential and orderly basis. To be voluntary means to fully respect the wishes of rural residents and allow them to make their own choices. We must not force them. We must not force them to move into cities through seizing their property and tearing down their houses with no consideration of their actual situation. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 594)

He gave these guidelines to cadres in legal departments:

We need to make the people feel that justice and fairness are on their side. We will focus on solving prominent problems that undermine the people's rights and interests. No one should be allowed to turn a deaf ear to people's calls to the police for help, to make lawsuits unaffordable for ordinary people, to abuse power and infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of the people, and to let law enforcement create fabricated and false cases. (Xi 2017b, 31)

Before the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC also emphasized expanding and strengthening the state-owned economy, but mostly from the perspective that the state-owned enterprises are the pillar of the national economy, important foundation of the socialist system, and basic forces to participate in international competition, cooperation, and division of labor. These are certainly true. However, since entering the new era, Xi Jinping has further put the reform of state-owned enterprises under the guiding principle of putting the people at the center and letting the people share the fruits of the reform. He suggests that public ownership as the main sector in China's economy and the dominant role of state-owned enterprises are "an institutional support for the various ethnic groups in China to share the fruits of the reform" (Xi 2017a, 63), while state-owned enterprises are "important forces that safeguard the common interests of the people" (Xi 2017a, 54). The above analysis highlights the nature of state-owned enterprises as ownership by all the people, as well as the connection between the state-owned economy and the fundamental interests of the people. From the point of view of the starting and ending points of the reform and opening-up, this is another form of calibration.

3. Core Issues of the Reform and Opening-Up

For a long time since the beginning of the reform and opening-up, we have taken the relationship between planning and the market, or between macro-control and the market as the core issue of economic reform (and to a large extent it has also included economic exchanges with other countries). In the early days of reform and opening-up, resources were allocated mainly by planning and were supplemented by the market. After the transition from the planned economy to the socialist market economy, the market became the basis of resource allocation, and the planning, along with price, finance, taxation and other economic means were brought into the scope of macro-control. At this time, under the influence of neoliberalism, a kind of public opinion appeared in economists' circles, asserting macro-control still had the "trace of planned economy," and that "the government needs only to do a good job in market services in the future," advocating the idea of the "big market, small government." Entering the new era, Xi Jinping has defined macro-control as a function of the government and generalized the core issue of economic system reform as "to properly manage the relationship between the government and the market," changing the foundational role of the market in resource allocation into the "decisive role" in resource allocation, while emphasizing the "more effective role of the government" (Xi 2013). Thus, the understanding and handling of the core issues of the reform and opening-up have been further calibrated.

Xi Jinping explained why the foundational role of the market in resource allocation has been switched for the decisive role of the market in resource allocation.

After 20 years' practice, our country's socialist market economic system has been preliminarily established, but there are still many problems, which mainly lie in the fact that the market

order is not standardized and the use of unfair means to seek economic interests is widespread; the development of production factor market is lagging behind; idle factors and large numbers of unsatisfied effective demands coexist; market rules are not unified, and sectorial protectionism and local protectionism abound. Inadequate market competition prevents the survival of the fittest and structural adjustment, etc. Unless these problems are solved, it will be difficult to form a complete socialist market economy. (Xi 2014a, 55–56)

He also said,

To let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources will be conducive to the establishment of a correct perception in the whole society and the whole Party and a correct perception regarding the association between the government and the market. This will be advantageous to the transformation of the mode of economic development, conducive to the transformation of government functions, and reduce corruption. (Xi 2014a, 56)

Does this positioning of the role of the market mean that the role of the government in the market economy will be weakened, and that service alone is needed with no or less management? Xi Jinping has firmly denied this. He points out,

The market plays a decisive role in general terms, and we should not blindly and dogmatically talk about the market playing a decisive role. Instead we should make the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources, and at the same time improve the role of the government. (Xi 2017c, 57–58)

The market plays a decisive role in resource allocation, not the whole role. (Xi 2014a, 57)

Let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources and let the government play a better role. These two sides are organically unified, not mutually opposing. Therefore we cannot separate or oppose these two sides. (Xi 2014c, 117)

When it comes to the role of the market and the role of the government, we need to adopt a dialectical and two-point approach. We need to make good use of both “the invisible hand” and “the visible hand,” and strive to form a pattern in which the role of the market and the role of the government are organically integrated, complementary, coordinated and mutually reinforcing, so as to promote sustained and sound economic and social development. (Xi 2014c, 116)

In response to the idea that the government should do little or nothing about the market Xi Jinping remarked,

There is no doubt that the government should earnestly fulfill their service function, but at the same time we should remember that its management function is also very important and should optimize performance. If we emphasize service without management, it is not good either, because we need management while providing services. Management and service cannot be ignored and the government should not only administer necessary regulations, but also improve its necessary management role. (Xi 2014a, 54)

Besides, we need to “intensify the transformation of government functions, not only actively removing the power that should be removed, but also earnestly managing the affairs that should be managed well, thus withdrawing where we are ‘interfering too much’ while intervening where necessary” (Xi 2014a, 55). For example, in areas such as national defense, the government should play a decisive role, and some strategic energy resources should also be firmly controlled by the government. In addressing structural problems in the economy, we need to give full play to the government role of policy

guidance in solving structural contradictions of the economy, performing “three removals (of overcapacity, overstocking, and overleveraging), one reduction (of cost), and one strengthening (of weak areas),” improving the capacity of effective supply, and speeding up independent research and development of core technologies.

In particular, Xi Jinping emphasizes not only the role of the government in the market economy, but also makes reference to its role in terms of the superiority of the socialist system.

One of the key factors in the great success of our economic development is that we have brought into play the strength of both the market economy and socialist system. We are developing the market economy under the general premise of the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system. Therefore, we should never forget the attribute “socialism” at any time. The reason why we call it a socialist market economy is to uphold the superiority of our system and effectively guard against the disadvantages of the capitalist market economy. We must adhere to dialectics and two-point theory, continue to work hard on the integration of the basic socialist system with the market economy, and give full play to our strengths in both aspects. We need both “efficient markets” and a “promising government,” so as to solve this world economic conundrum through practice. (Xi 2017c, 64)

This discussion further highlights the essential differences between the role of socialist government and capitalist government under the conditions of market economy. At the same time, it also makes people realize that under socialist conditions, how to combine the roles of the government and the market is still not fully solved, and therefore requires continuous exploration.

4. The Foothold of the Reform and Opening-Up

The CPC has always advocated revolution, construction and reform on the basis of its own strength. As early as 1956, Mao Zedong said, “China’s revolution and construction depend mainly on the efforts of the Chinese people, with foreign aid playing a supplementary role” (Mao 1992, 148). After the founding of the PRC, it actively sought the assistance of countries in the socialist camp whilst doing everything possible to trade with capitalist countries. On the other hand, faced with the US imperialist economic blockade and the Khrushchev bloc’s interruption of aid, it promoted the spirit of self-reliance, facilitating a large number of scientific research achievements represented by progress in nuclear and satellite technologies, and establishing an independent and complete industrial and national economic system. After the reform and opening-up, another trend has emerged, that is to give up research and development in technologies that can be bought from abroad. In the past 40 years, the total volume of China’s economy has soared, with great progress in the level of science and technology. However, overall, science and technology has had a rather weak support for economic and social development, with a far lower rate of contribution than that of developed countries. Core technology research and development lacks the strong alliance that can be found among big companies like Microsoft, Intel, Google and Apple. To a large extent, economic growth is still dominated by the input of resources, capital, and labor. China is still in the mid-range in the international economic industrial chain and many key and core technologies, materials, components, and equipment are reliant upon others. This situation has arisen from the weakened sense of self-reliance after China’s external conditions have improved. To this end, all previous CPC Central Committees have prioritized, proposed and implemented

the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education, and gradually increased the country's investment in scientific and technological research and development, but the situation is still not good enough. Therefore, since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the CPC Central Committee has further proposed that innovation is the first driving force leading development, implemented the strategy of innovation-driven development, and promoted the “made in China 2025” strategy. It calls for removing all institutional barriers to scientific and technological innovation, and releasing and stimulating China's huge potential of science and technology. This shows that the new era is also calibrated on the foothold of reform and opening-up.

As for the significance and path of independent innovation, Xi Jinping mainly presents his ideas from the perspective of the following three relationships:

The first is the relationship between big countries and powerful countries, and between economic scale and scientific and technological level.

Historical facts show that economic scale does not equal economic power. A country's long-term backwardness is ultimately due to technological backwardness, not to the size of its economy. In history, China has long been among the world's major economic powers, and its economic aggregate once accounted for about one third of the world's total. However, due to backward technology and low level of industrialization, China has been repeatedly defeated by countries whose economic aggregate is much smaller than China's since modern times. Why is that? China is not losing on economic scale, but on technological backwardness. With China lagging behind in technological innovation and industrial manufacturing, the Western powers were able to open its doors with powerful ships and cannons. Technological backwardness is the root cause of China's backwardness and defeats in modern history. This is a profound lesson that we must keep in mind. (Xi 2017c, 126)

Although China's total economic output ranks second in the world, the problems of being big but not strong, and of being bloated and weak, are quite prominent, which is mainly reflected in the lack of innovation ability. This is China's “Achilles heel” as a big economy. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2018, 159)

The second one is the relationship between scientific and technological innovation and economic and social development.

Generally speaking, the situation that core technologies in China are subject to others has not changed fundamentally. We do not have enough reserves of science and technology which can create new industries and lead future development. The industry is still at the middle and low end of the global value chain, and there is still a big gap between China and developed countries in terms of high-tech in the military and security fields. We must focus our development on innovation, foster new drivers of development through innovation, and foster more leading-edge development that takes advantage of the first-movers. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2018, 159)

He also pointed out,

International economic competition and even comprehensive national strength competition is the competition of innovation ability in the final analysis. Whoever takes the initiative in innovation will take the lead. We need to vigorously implement the strategy of innovation-driven development, accelerate the improvement of innovation mechanisms, promote scientific and technological innovation, enterprise innovation, product innovation, market innovation and brand innovation in an all-round way, accelerate the transformation of scientific and technological achievements into real productive forces, and promote closer integration of science and technology with the economy. (Xi 2017c, 125)

Coordinated development, green development, open development and shared development are all conducive to strengthening the driving force of development, but the core is innovation. If we focus on innovation, we will grab the key to overall economic and social development. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2018, 157)

Furthermore, since the United States launched the trade war, Xi has repeatedly stressed, “self-reliance is the basis for the Chinese nation to stand among the nations of the world, and independent innovation is the only way to climb to the world’s scientific and technological peak” (*People’s Daily*, May 29, 2018). We should carry forward the spirit of independent research in nuclear and satellite technologies in the 1960s and 1970s, strengthen key technology research, promote core technology breakthroughs, and firmly grasp the initiative of scientific and technological development in our own hands.

The third one is the relationship between institutional reform and scientific and technological innovation. Xi points out that “to implement the strategy of innovation-driven development, we must deepen the reform,” and “to comprehensively deepen reform, we need to focus on the task of making the enterprises the main players in innovation and promote the integration of enterprises, universities and research institutes” (Xi 2017c, 140). To remove those institutional barriers in the chain of scientific and technological innovation, and to deal with the loose link between innovation and the various sections in its application, “we must deepen the reform of the science and technology system, and break all the ideational obstacles and institutional barriers in scientific and technological innovation” (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 25). He put forward a series of policies and measures to this end, such as establishing a sound intellectual property rights protection system, punishing illegal and criminal acts of infringement, and creating a good environment of equal competition; improving tax policies conducive to technological innovation by enterprises and eliminating distortions in such economic leverages as prices, interest rates and exchange rates; setting up state-owned asset operating companies or investment companies, setting up China State-Owned Capital VC Fund, and supporting innovative enterprises which include small and micro enterprises; accelerating the pace of military–civilian integration and giving full play to the respective advantages of the military and civilian sectors. In regards to human resources, he mentioned the need to reform and improve the mechanism of talent development, establish a more flexible talent management mechanism, improve the role of the evaluation system, and break through the institutional barriers of talent flow, use and function; deepen educational reform, improve the quality of personnel training, and form an educational environment conducive to the growth of innovative personnel; formulate more active plans for international talent introduction so as to attract more overseas innovative talents to start their own businesses or work in China. He stressed that excellent scientific and technological talents should “earn both fame and fortune,” in the sense that “fame is the honor, and fortune is the return of material benefits, among which owning property rights is the biggest incentive” (Xi 2017c, 139). In a situation where “a missile-builder makes less money than a street peddler, and scalpel holder makes less than a hair dresser, innovation would have no incentive” (Xi 2017a, 42).

In addition to calibrating the foothold of the systemic reform, Xi Jinping emphasized the top-level design of the CPC Central Committee and the superiority of the socialist system in the reform of the science and technology system.

We have to note that an important key to the success of our socialist system is the way it can concentrate efforts on major tasks. Many important scientific and technological achievements in our country have been made by relying on this magic weapon. We must not lose it! We need to let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources. At the same time, we need to improve the role of the government, strengthen overall planning and coordination, vigorously carry out collaborative innovation, concentrate our efforts on major issues, focus on major, sophisticated and basic issues, and form a strong synergy for independent innovation. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 26)

Furthermore,

In core technological research and development, strong cooperation is better than going alone, and some measures should be taken to break the shackles of departmental interests and factional views. The idea that being the head of a chicken is better than being the tail of a phoenix, or focusing all one's effort on one's small business will not lead to collaboration and final success. (Xi 2016c, 14)

It is not hard to see that these discussions deeply reflect the experience and lessons of independent innovation before and after the reform and opening-up, and really get to the crux of the matter.

5. On Independence of the Reform and Opening-Up

What should be the criterion for the success or failure of reform and opening-up? Is it based on the political system and social views of the Western bourgeoisie, or on the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and Marxist scientific theory? This controversy has existed since the beginning of the period of reform and opening-up. At the beginning of the period of reform and opening-up, Deng Xiaoping warned,

After the crushing of the Gang of Four, there appeared a trend of thought in China, bourgeois liberalization, with its worship of capitalist countries' democracy and freedom, and denial of socialism . . . The idea of liberalization has not only existed in the past few years, but also exists today; it not only exists among ordinary people in our society, but also exists within the CPC. (Deng 1993, 123–124)

He argued,

So-called reform for some people should be renamed liberalization or capitalization. At the heart of their "reform" is capitalism. The reform that we are talking about is different from theirs, and that is something that will continue to be debated. (Deng 1993, 297)

As it later turned out, this current of thought has indeed reappeared in different guises under different circumstances. In recent years, it has had two prominent manifestations. One is called "Western constitutionalism" and the other is "universal values." Under its influence, various arguments have emerged within the CPC. For example, it argues that we should "shift from a revolutionary Party to a ruling Party," "change the name of the Communist Party," "abolish the dictatorship of the proletariat," "allow other political parties to compete with the Communist Party of China," "let the CPC organizations withdraw from government at all levels," "nationalize the army," etc. Some people, under the pretext of "no arguing," refuse to confront these erroneous proposals, saying that it will "provoke." The CPC Central Committee in the new era has refuted these proposals one by one with a clear stance.

In regard to such issues as whether China should reform its socialist system in accordance with the Western model of constitutionalism and whether it should abolish the people's democratic dictatorship and the leadership of the CPC, Xi Jinping made it clear that "the people's democracy in China is fundamentally different from the so-called 'constitutionalism' in the West," and that "the leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Xi 2017d, 27–28).

China chooses a political system led by the working class and based on the worker-peasant alliance, a system of multi-Party cooperation and political consultation led by the CPC, a system of regional ethnic autonomy, and a system of self-governance at the grass-roots level. All these have distinct Chinese characteristics. Such a set of institutional arrangements can effectively ensure that the people enjoy extensive and adequate rights and freedoms, effectively adjust political relations within the country, effectively promote the development of productive forces and the continuous improvement of people's living standards, and effectively safeguard national independence. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 61–62)

In response to different comments on "changing the name of the CPC" and "the shift from a revolutionary Party into a ruling Party," Xi Jinping warned,

All kinds of hostile forces at home and abroad always attempt to make the CPC change its flag and its name, which would be to abandon our belief in Marxism, socialism and communism, while some of us, even some comrades in the Party fail to see their hidden motives. They think that Western "universal values" have already existed for hundreds of years, and ask why we should not accept them? Why can't we borrow some Western political ideas? What do we have to lose in accepting them, and why do we have to go another way? Some people take Western theories and discourses as the golden rule and unknowingly become the trumpeter of Western capitalist ideology. (Xi 2016a, 8)

He repeatedly stressed that "the revolutionary ideal is higher than heaven." In the report to the 19th CPC National Congress, he pointed out again,

The revolutionary ideal is higher than heaven. The great ideal of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics are the spiritual pillar and political soul of Chinese communists and the ideological basis for maintaining Party unity. We should take the strengthening of our ideals and faith as the primary task of the Party's ideological construction, educate and guide the whole Party to bear the Party's goal in mind, strengthen the spiritual backbone of communists, solve the problem in world outlook, life outlook and values as the "master switch," and consciously become a firm believer and faithful practitioner of the lofty ideal of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics. (People's Publishing House 2017, 52)

He added at a symposium to mark the 120th anniversary of Zhou Enlai's birth in early 2018, "Don't forget that we are communists, don't forget that we are revolutionaries, and don't lose our ideals and beliefs at any time" (*People's Daily*, March 2, 2018).

In response to the phenomenon of abandoning the struggle in the ideological field under the guise of so-called "no arguing" and letting the rhetoric of "universal values" prevail, Xi Jinping warned,

Sticking to positive publicity does not mean giving up the struggle of public opinion. Hostile forces are there to promote what they call "universal values." Do they really mean "universal values"? Absolutely not, what they say is false advertising and their purpose is simply a fight for positions, for people's hearts and for the masses, and ultimately to overthrow the

leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system in China. If these remarks are allowed to flourish with false claims and blatant lies prevailing, they will inevitably disturb the heart of the Party and the people, and endanger the leadership of the Party and the security of the political power of the socialist country. (Xi 2017e, 27)

CPC members and cadres should not be credulous towards political rumors and absurd ideas spread by those with ulterior motives, and act imprudently when such rumors or ideas are heard. In the meantime, we should not be silent and should refute them in a timely manner so as to let the right voice reign. This does not contradict our strategy of keeping a low profile and no arguing. (Xi 2017e, 209)

He demanded that we should “be bold to act, regulate and show the sword with regard to all wrong words and deeds” (Xi 2017e, 27) and “act with a clear target without fear of face-to-face confrontation” (Xi 2017e, 34).

As for why the reform should not copy Western “constitutionalism,” Xi Jinping gave the following reasons.

First, we must have confidence in our own system.

The reasons why we are deepening the reform comprehensively are not because the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is bad but because we are to make it better. When we say that we need to strengthen institutional confidence, we do not mean to stand still. Rather, we need to address institutional shortcomings and ensure that our system is mature and durable. We should not only avoid falling into “the middle-income trap,” but also the trap of “Westernization.” (Xi 2014a, 22)

Second, what kind of system a country implements depends on its national conditions.

As the old Chinese saying goes, “oranges that grow in the south lose their sweetness when transplanted to the north.” We need to learn from the beneficial achievements of foreign political experiences, but we must never abandon the fundamental principles of China’s political system. China has more than 9.6 million square kilometers of land and 56 ethnic groups. Whose model can we follow? Who could tell us what to do? Towards the diverse world, we should adopt an inclusive attitude, learn from others, and absorb others’ good things into our own good things from an independent standpoint. But we should never swallow others’ good things without understanding them or imitate others and thus lose our own unique characteristics. Copying other countries’ political systems will not work, even the country’s future and destiny will be buried in the end, since they do not fit in with our conditions. Only a system rooted and fully nourished in one’s own soil can be the most reliable and effective one. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 60)

Customs may completely differ from each other within the distance of 100 kilometers. What kind of governance system a country chooses is determined by its historical heritage, cultural tradition, level of economic and social development, and its people. Today’s national governance system in China is the result of long-term development, gradual improvement and endogenous evolution on the basis of our historical inheritance, cultural traditions and economic and social development. China’s national governance system needs to be improved and perfected, but in regard to how to improve it, we need to have our own ideas and remain firmly committed to them. (Xi 2014a, 21)

Third, it is impossible to judge the merits of a country’s political system without referring to specific social and political conditions.

Two erroneous ways of thinking exist with regards to the establishment of a political system. One is to see that other countries have something that we do not have and believe that we lack

it and must copy it here. The other is to see that we have something that others do not have, and believe that what we have is unnecessary and should be abandoned. Both are simplistic, one-sided, and therefore incorrect. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 59–60)

Fourth, China's practice shows that the Western model is not the only possible one to govern a country. Xi said: "We have declared the end of the idea of 'the end of history' with facts. We have declared the end of the monolithic view of history that the Western model is the final choice of all countries" (Xi 2017d, 7).

Fifth, taking the Western political system as the model is a common tactic used by the West to stir up turmoil in other countries.

When Western countries plan "color revolutions," they often begin with the political system, especially the party system of the country that they are targeting, engineering public opinion and making a big splash. And then they will depict the political systems and party systems which differ from theirs as illegitimate to incite people to engage in street politics. (Xi 2017d, 18)

This raises the question,

Is it freer, more democratic, more stable if all countries just adopt the Western model? When some developing countries copy the Western political system and party system, what is the result? Many countries are in political and social turmoil and people are dislocated. The living proof is in front of us. We cannot change the past, but what is to come is yet to be determined. We must be clear-headed and firm. (Xi 2017d, 19)

Therefore, "In terms of the political system, we should stick to our socialist system from beginning to end whatever happens outside" (Xi 2017d, 8).

Why must we promptly refute the claims of "universal values" and not be silent about them? Xi Jinping explained this is because comrades on the ideological front should first have the consciousness of political power and of the front of fighting. "Ideology is about flags, roads, and national political security" (Xi 2017e, 35–36), he said. "If we do not occupy the propaganda and ideological field, other people will occupy it" (Xi 2017e, 30). Second, we should have the awareness of the existence of hostility. He said that various hostile forces want to overthrow the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system in China.

One of the breakthrough points is the ideological field, where enemies try to confuse people's thoughts, and then fish in troubled waters and achieve victory in chaos. Under the new situation, the struggle in the field of ideology is complex and acute. Both history and reality have warned us that once the ideological and public opinion position is penetrated, other lines of defense would be difficult to hold. In the field of ideological struggle, we have no room for compromise or retreat, and we must win complete victory. (Xi 2017e, 37)

Third, we must have the sense of responsibility. As Xi suggests, today, on the one hand, "foreign hostile forces are intensifying the attempt of infiltration and Westernization, and some organizations and individuals inside China are using various kinds of tactics to create confusion and compete for people's hearts and minds." On the other hand, "some units and Party and government officials are not politically sensitive, nor do they have a strong sense of responsibility. Their ambiguity on major ideological issues has encouraged the spread of erroneous ideological trends" (Xi 2017e, 35). He stressed,

Party committees at all levels and publicity departments, organization departments, education departments must strengthen the leadership and management; Party newspapers, Party journals and Party websites, Party and government cadres schools, institutions of higher education must strengthen the political consciousness as well as sense of duty, remain highly consistent with the Party Central Committee on major issues, and never contradict the central voice. Never should one eat the Communist Party's food while smashing the Communist Party's pot. (Xi 2017e, 36)

Comrades on the propaganda and ideological front should be soldiers instead of gentlemen; they should not be “fence-sitters” or “vacillators,” and they cannot be overly concerned with their own reputation. Comrades on the propaganda and ideological front should fulfill their sacred duties and glorious missions, and actively devote themselves to the front lines of the struggle in the publicity and ideological field with the attitude of fighting and the responsibility of soldiers. (Xi 2017e, 45)

He also demands that we must be clear-cut and dare to act on issues of political principle and guiding significance, seriously criticize and deal with deviations and mistakes, and “firmly stand up to speak for the media and journalists who are attacked due to their voices of justice” (Xi 2017e, 49–50).

In explaining the reason why speeches on “universal values” must be refuted when they appear, Xi Jinping especially mentioned the struggle on the Internet.

The Internet has become the main battleground for public opinion. Some comrades have said that the Internet is the “biggest variable” that we are facing, and if it is not handled properly, it will become a continuous trouble in our heart. Western anti-China forces have been trying to use the Internet to overthrow China. Many years ago, some Western politicians claimed that “with the Internet, there is a way to deal with China” and socialist countries’ embrace of the West shall begin with the Internet. From American surveillance programs such as “prism” and “X-key score,” the power and scale of their internet activities have been far beyond the world’s imagination. Whether we can stand up to and win the battle on the Internet will have a direct bearing on our ideological and political security. (Xi 2017e, 28–29)

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed that “in today’s world, the invisible war is everywhere in the field of ideology and the battle without guns is ceaseless in the field of politics” (Xi 2017d, 18). In 2015 he predicted,

The next five years will be a time when the risks that China faces in all aspects of its development are accumulating and revealing themselves in a concentrating manner. The major risks we face include the economic, political, ideological, social and natural risks at home, as well as economic, political and military ones from abroad. If major risks take place and we fail to deal with them, our national security will be threatened and the process of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects will be forced to a halt. We must give high priority to risk prevention, and make every effort to prevent major risks from emerging or to be able to harm us as events unfold. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 833)

The new changes in the domestic and international situation fully demonstrate not only the risk prediction of the CPC Central Committee in 2015, but also its ability to tackle them.

From the above facts, it can be clearly seen that the emphasis of the new era on the independence of reform and opening-up and the critique of Western ideological trends of “constitutionalism” and “universal values” are more distinct than ever before. This is undoubtedly the calibration of the course of reform and opening-up in the new era.

6. On Party Conduct and Social Atmosphere through the Reform and Opening-Up

Problems of Party conduct and social atmosphere also existed before the reform and opening-up, but there were many new different manifestations after the reform and opening-up began. For example, in regard to Party conduct, some corrupt people mixing power and money have engaged in vote soliciting and bribery, buying and selling government positions, “with clearly marked prices” and “immediate delivery upon payment” (Xi 2016d, 47, 48). Some people handle several ID cards, passports, Hong Kong and Macao entry permits, and even hold foreign green cards. So-called “naked officials” transfer misappropriated funds to their wives and children who live abroad. Some Party members and cadres are fully immersed in a vulgar and decadent political culture of cronyism, elitism, hidden rules and so on. As regards to the social atmosphere, there are some people who have no values, no sense of good and evil, and no bottom line. They dare to produce fake food and drugs with poisonous substances, and do anything unethical and in violation of laws and regulations for money. Prostitution, gambling and drug dealing persist despite repeated crackdowns and organized crime syndicates appear one after another. The Internet is full of false information, fraud, violence, pornography, and is used to spread rumors, abet crimes, distort history and smear martyrs; some literary and art professionals are willing to work as slaves of the market, regarding their works as profit-seeking cash cows or vulgar sensory stimulation, searching for novelty and the kitsch, and blurring the line between the ugly and the beautiful. None of these are problems of the reform and opening-up itself, but they do occur in the market economy and the open environment. They are the result of the expansion of the market. In this regard, the CPC Central Committee from the very beginning has reminded the whole Party to pay close attention to both material and spiritual civilization, to be firm in both spheres, and never allow the principle of commodity economy to penetrate the Party. But the problem has not been fundamentally solved, and some manifestations of it are becoming more and more serious. In the new era, the CPC Central Committee has intensified its efforts in these areas and achieved remarkable results. In a sense, this also reflects the calibration of the direction of reform and opening-up.

Deng Xiaoping anticipated these challenges,

With the opening to the outside world, the decadent things of capitalism will also come. In the meantime, we need to be aware of the bottom line of invigorating the economy at home. There has to be another line, which is the fight against economic crimes. (Deng 1994, 408–409)

We must oppose corruption throughout the process of the reform and opening-up. . . . As long as we develop our productive forces, maintain a certain rate of economic growth and stick to both material and spiritual construction, we will be able to advance socialist spiritual civilization. (Deng 1993, 379)

Later, although the economy maintained a high growth rate, problems in the Party conduct as well as in the social atmosphere were not solved correspondingly, and some of them have become more serious. For this reason, Xi Jinping made criticism from two aspects. Objectively, the reform

fails to pay attention to the matching mechanisms, transitional measures, and the order and timing of things, which led to gaps and loopholes in the system and mechanisms, and

therefore opportunities for some people to seek rent and engage in corruption. . . . We have seen phenomena during the reform and opening-up, where some people take advantage of the gap between the old and the new systems to satisfy their own interests with large profits. How many people are fattened by the double-track price system? How many people have become rich in the reform of state-owned enterprises? (Xi 2014a, 81–82)

Subjectively, Xi believes that “one important reason is that we have not been serious enough” (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2014, 351). “Discipline has broken down due to lenient, loose and soft implementation” (Xi 2016d, 67), in that “some leading cadres are afraid to take actions, with a cowardly mentality that will not offend others for fear of losing votes” (Xi 2016d, 123). He criticized some propaganda cadres who dare not talk about the Party’s supervision of the media in a straightforward manner, who believe that

now is the era of capital media and commercial media, in which capital is king, as well as the era of We-Media in which everyone has a microphone. Thus it is meaningless to insist on the Party’s supervision of the media. (Xi 2017e, 42)

It is for this reason that we have failed to firmly “grasp the initiative, dominance and right to discourse in the sphere of values” (Xi 2017e, 107).

In view of Party conduct, the CPC Central Committee has stressed that if we want to govern the country, the Party must be governed first and the Party must be strictly governed. To that end, after the 18th National Congress, the Party introduced the “Eight Rules from the CPC Central Committee,” punished a group of senior cadres who were seriously corrupt and in violation of the law, carried out the Party’s mass line education, special education on “being strict in cultivating one’s moral character, in preventing the abuse of power, and in self-disciplining,” and “party building studies.” In addition, the Party’s organizational discipline, inspection and supervision have been strengthened, with issues of so-called naked officials and personal background fraud dealt with in a concentrated manner. As Xi Jinping said, these measures “generally revolve around the issues of Party discipline and regulation, as well as those of lenient, loose and soft implementation of disciplining measures” (Xi 2016d, 67). He pointed out that in order to govern the Party strictly, we must begin with strict and impartial discipline. “To strengthen Party discipline, the first priority is to strengthen political discipline” (Xi 2016d, 13); to govern the Party strictly, “we must start from the CPC’s Political Bureau of the Central Committee” (Xi 2016d, 98); “the key is to focus on the ‘key minority’ of leading cadres,” and “to govern officials strictly” (Xi 2016d, 110); “Power must be put into the ‘cage’ of the system” (Xi 2016d, 59) and “stick to the idea that everyone is equal before the system and there are no exceptions in the implementation of discipline” (Xi 2016d, 71). We should “persist in hunting tigers and flies together, not only resolutely investigating leading cadres’ violations of law and regulation, but also effectively beating corruption that concerns the everyday life of the people” (Xi 2016d, 71). As Xi Jinping points out, “the most fundamental thing of strict Party discipline is to ensure that Party organizations at all levels and all Party members and officials act in accordance with the principles of political life within the Party and various Party regulations” (Xi 2016d, 82). In response to some people’s doubts about whether the requirements for Party members and cadres are too strict, he pointed out: “the problem today is not that the disciplining is too strict, but too lenient and soft. The problem of being too strict does not exist” (Xi 2014b, 23).

In view of the social atmosphere, the CPC Central Committee has put forward a series of measures tailored to address the specific nature of each of the different problems. For example, special campaigns have been launched to address issues relating to social governance. Xi Jinping urged,

While dealing with pornography, gambling, drugs and organized crime, we must crack down on them, and we must not allow them to develop in scale. For key issues such as food and drug safety, environmental pollution . . . governance and management must be strengthened. (Xi 2018, 135)

Strictly guard against systemic and regional risks in every line of defense from farmland to dining tables, from laboratories to hospitals. (Xi 2018, 142)

In particular, he demanded that the Internet must be managed well, saying that “not only the right of Internet users to exchange ideas and express their wishes should be respected, but good order should be established as well in accordance with the law” (*People’s Daily*, December 16, 2016). As for spiritual issues, the CPC Central Committee proposes to vigorously cultivate the core socialist value system and carry forward core socialist values, accelerate the construction of a value system that fully reflects Chinese characteristics, national characteristics and the characteristics of the times, and strive to seize the commanding heights of value system. Xi Jinping said, “we must seriously absorb the moral essence of excellent Chinese traditional culture, vigorously carry forward the national spirit with patriotism as the core and the spirit of the times with reform and innovation as the core” (Xi 2017e, 141). We should “vigorously strengthen the construction of social ethics, professional ethics, family virtues and personal morality, and create a strong atmosphere in which the virtuous and good are cultivated” (*People’s Daily*, December 30, 2015).

Xi Jinping attaches particular importance to the role of literary and artistic works in guiding social conduct and building spiritual civilization.

We should pass on the true, the good and the beautiful through literary works, pass on the values of being good, guide people to enhance their moral judgment and sense of honor and to aspire and pursue a moral, respectful and ethical life. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 135)

We need to give greater prominence to the development of literary and art personnel. . . . Under the conditions of developing the socialist market economy, we should also deal with the relationship between justice and benefit, seriously consider the social effects of literary and artistic works, emphasize taste, stress artistic virtue, preserve the virtue of integrity for future generations, promote virtue for the benefit of the world and leave a clean name for ourselves. (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 126)

Xi pointed out that under the conditions of developing socialist market economy, cultural products cannot be completely negligent of economic benefits. “However, compared with social benefits, economic benefits are secondary. When two benefits and two values are in conflict, economic benefits should be subordinated to social benefits and market values should be subordinated to social values” (Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee 2016, 132). On the issue of cultural system reform, he stressed that we must

fully understand the relationship between ideological attributes and industrial attributes, social benefits and economic benefits, always adhering to the direction of socialist advanced

culture, and always putting social benefits in the first place. No matter what or how things change, the direction cannot be changed and the front cannot be lost. (2017e, 185)

Calibrations of the direction of the reform and opening-up made in the new era are comprehensive. Politics, economy, culture, society and ecology are all included. Not only are domestic affairs included, but foreign affairs and national defense are included as well. The above six points are just a partial list. The reason why these calibrations can be made is, on the one hand, that the new era is based on practice of a longer period of reform and opening-up in previous years, and therefore has accumulated more experience, with problems more clearly exposed. On the other hand, and more importantly, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core, in the spirit of being highly responsible and daring to shoulder the responsibilities of the Party and the people, has correctly solved the problem of understanding the relationship between the two historical periods before and after the reform and opening-up, thus providing more favorable conditions for summing up the historical experience of the PRC in the past 70 years as well as for finding out the deviations from where we started. Of course, some of these problems still have a long way to go before they can be solved fundamentally, while others have just begun to be solved. In either case, the key is that the ice has been broken, the waterway has been opened, and the way ahead has been designated. As long as we continue to advance in the direction guided by Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era and always adhere to emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts, the giant ship of socialist reform and opening-up will surely be able to ride the wind and break the waves and reach the glorious shore successfully.

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Notes on Contributor

Jiamu Zhu is President of the Society of National History of the People's Republic of China, and former Director of the Institute of Contemporary China Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, whose research mainly focuses on the history of the People's Republic of China. He is the author of *China's Industrialization and Contemporary History of China* (2009) and *On Chen Yun* (2010).

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